

Managing Public Lands for Hard-To-Define
Human Values

A Preliminary Inquiry

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"The long and intricate process by which evolution helped to shape the complex interrelationship of all living and nonliving things may be explicable in purely scientific terms, but the simple fact of the living world and our place on it evokes awe, wonder, a sense of mystery -- a spiritual response -- when one reflects on its deeper meaning."

*from Earth in the Balance: Ecology
and the Human Spirit*

by Al Gore

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MANAGING PUBLIC LANDS FOR THE HUMAN SPIRIT

A Preliminary Inquiry

INTRODUCTION

The Expanding Role of the USDA Forest Service

As one of the United States' largest land managing agencies, the USDA Forest Service plays a central role in the stewardship of the public domain. Historically, the Forest Service has concerned itself with managing the National Forests to ensure a sustainable flow of benefits to the American public from timber, mining, grazing, and other extractive industries. While this mission remains as important as ever, the Forest Service has recently widened its focus to include other less tangible benefits, benefits commonly referred to as amenity goods and services. Indeed, the Forest Service's New Perspectives program is based on the recognition that the wealth of the National Forests "can be measured in economic, ecological, and spiritual terms." (Salwasser 1990, p. 32)

The growing realization that the National Forests are home to a multiplicity of values brings with it a host of new management, academic, and research challenges. Chief among them is the need to better understand the meanings ascribed to the National Forests by an increasingly multicultural citizenry, and the need to develop alternative ways of valuing those meanings for planning and managerial purposes.

Spiritual Renewal and the National Forests

In this regard, the spiritual responses to nature referred to by Vice President Gore in his book *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit* are of particular interest to the Forest Service. Indeed, in a recent memorandum distributed to all Regional Foresters and Station Directors, Forest Service Chief Robertson outlines several basic principles to guide the future management of the National Forests and Grasslands. Among them is a mandate to "'take care of the people and their cultural diversity' by meeting the basic needs of people and communities who depend on the land for food, fuel, shelter, livelihood, recreation, and spiritual renewal." (Robertson, 1992)

While each of us may have our own definition of what Chief Robertson means when he speaks of spiritual renewal, a widely shared definition remains elusive (Schreyer and McDonald, 1991). "Spiritual" appears to apply to a feeling of relationship to an other that is evoked by being out in nature, but a precise understanding of that relationship and its various dynamics are little understood. To some the word has religious meaning. To others it has none. If the Forest Service is to plan effectively for the future, a better scientific understanding of the interplay between public lands and the human spirit is needed. In the same way that land managers use valid and reliable information about the environmental factors that account for a commodity's quality so they can enhance future productivity, they need valid and reliable information about the environmental factors that influence spiritual values so they can enhance future service to their human and non-human constituencies.

There are, then, many practical reasons why initiating a program of research to better understand the spiritual dimensions of public land management is worthwhile. A few of them are now highlighted.

Management Needs

1. **DAMAGE ASSESSMENT:** The Exxon Valdez oil spill is illustrative. The March 1989 accident did substantial damage to the natural resources of Alaska's Prince William Sound. Initially the U. S. Department of Justice determined that the monetary value of the damage was small, relative to other damages, because of the small population of Native Americans in the area. The question of subsistence use of the environment by native peoples became a pivotal issue, however. Research on the subject demonstrated that the state-of-the-art of economics was inadequate to assign monetary value to cultural, traditional, spiritual, and subsistence values of the environment to the native peoples.

An important and poorly understood part of the damage suffered by native peoples affected by such accidents lies in the cultural, traditional, and religious meaning of the natural environment. For want of a better term, this dimension of the problem can be called the "spiritual benefit" of the environment. The term connotes a broad range of difficult to identify and quantify values. The term includes but goes far beyond religious values.

Identifying and quantifying those values that so far evade monetary valuation, and for which monetary valuation may even be improper, may greatly enhance the Forest Service's ability to

understand and assess the damages from environmental accidents and managerial actions.

2. **FOREST MANAGEMENT IN THE SOUTHWEST:** Forest management actions in the southwestern United States, especially timber harvest actions, forest and fire management practices, and recreation and tourism activities, often inflict damage on places and environmental conditions for which Native Americans hold great reverence for cultural, traditional, and religious reasons. Such damages and the processes by which the Forest Service attempts to involve Native Americans in the decisions to ameliorate the damages often create conflict. The processes and the ameliorative actions are inadequate, because they are not based on a good understanding of the victims, their damaged values, and their communication and negotiation styles.

By better understanding multicultural differences in the valuation of National Forests, the agency will likely be better positioned to enhance its relationship with its various publics through an improved understanding of environmental values, improved communication styles, and modified management practices.

3. **UNDERSTANDING THE HUMAN/OTHER INTERACTION:** There are considerable multicultural differences in orientation to the natural environment. At one extreme is the belief that nature should be managed solely to meet human needs. At the other extreme is the belief that humans should manage themselves to harmonize with nature. And, of course, there are myriad orientations in between.

By better understanding these multicultural differences, the Forest Service will be better able to work with its various constituencies and plan appropriately for meeting their needs and preferences on the National Forests.

Academic Needs

1. **PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION:** If future land managers are to be effective public servants, they must be sensitized to the diversity of needs, preferences, and values of our increasingly multicultural citizenry who make use of the National Forests. This sensitization, in turn, must be based on a foundation of knowledge gained by systematic inquiry into the nature of such needs, preferences, and values -- including spiritual values.
2. **CLARIFYING CONCEPTS:** Education is an ongoing process of clarification of meaning. By examining the various spiritual meanings ascribed to the National Forests, we may work toward a clearer understanding of just what it is that people mean when they speak of spiritual renewal through their association with nature.
3. **VALUE OF KNOWING:** The sine qua non of education is seeking the truth. If the National Forests are the source of multiple meanings to people, it is important to try to understand all of those meanings if for no other reason than the sake of understanding. Acknowledging only selected meanings for economic or political purposes is insufficient.

Research Needs

1. **BETTER UNDERSTANDING THE "BIG" PICTURE:** The Forest Service is committed to integrating its understanding of commodity values and amenity values in a way that leads to more

comprehensive management planning for the National Forests. The idea of ecosystem management demands that all of the various factors that contribute to the health and well-being of ecosystems be studied so that their interactions and interrelationships can be accounted for in management practices. This task requires not only a scientific understanding of environmental factors, but also a scientific understanding of social factors. Among such social factors is the question of spiritual renewal.

2. **BENEFITS BASED APPROACH TO PLANNING:** The goal of management planning based on an understanding of the benefits derived from the National Forests requires a continuous commitment to more thoroughly understanding those benefits. While much is understood about benefits from commodity production, less is known about benefits from amenity goods and services. Research on the potential spiritual benefits of the National Forests would contribute to filling that void in the knowledge base.

3. **ALTERNATIVE VALUATION STRATEGIES:** While the economic valuation of commodities produced on the National Forests is useful and widely accepted as appropriate, it is less successful as a means for valuing amenity goods and services. Research which addresses alternative valuation strategies for amenity goods and services -- like spiritual benefits -- would be timely and useful in Forest Service decisionmaking processes.

Point of Departure

In response to these, and other, management, academic, and research needs, social scientists at the Rocky Mountain Forest and Range Experiment Station in Fort Collins, Colorado have undertaken

an ambitious project to specify a wide range of benefits people derive from outdoor recreation experiences. (Driver, Brown, and Peterson 1991) Spiritual benefits are but one of several types of benefit of interest to the Forest Service. Nevertheless, they present a particularly challenging category for investigation because of their elusive nature.

Santa Fe Focus Group: Overview

Beginnings

In July of 1991, Gary Elsner, Assistant Director of Recreation Operations for the U. S. Forest Service, Bev Driver, Research Forester with the Forest Service's Rocky Mountain Forest and Range Experiment Station in Fort Collins, Colorado, and Dan Dustin, Professor of Outdoor Recreation Planning and Policy at San Diego State University, met in Fort Collins to discuss the possibility of initiating a program of research to document the spiritual benefits people derive from outdoor recreation on the public lands. This meeting was prompted by earlier discussions regarding the meanings of spiritual responses to the National Forests and indications, as mentioned previously, that the Forest Service was gradually expanding its management philosophy to include a concern for spiritual renewal.

Early on in the meeting it became apparent that a more intensive discussion of definitional issues, dimensions of spirituality, and possible cultural differences in the interpretation of spiritual meaning would have to precede any program of research. As Driver put it, "How can we research spiritual benefits if we have no definition of them, if we have no way of distinguishing what is

spiritual from what isn't?" To that end it was decided that a small focus group would be convened in Santa Fe, New Mexico in June of 1992 to discuss the idea of spiritual benefits, to discuss possible research questions, to discuss appropriate research methodologies, and the like. It was further decided that participants in the focus group should be as diverse as possible in terms of their ethnic, cultural, and educational backgrounds to ensure a rich and productive dialogue. In the end, participants included Forest Service personnel, leisure scientists, and selected consultants from a variety of backgrounds including cultural anthropology, archeology, deep ecology, theology, New Age thinking, Eastern philosophy, and Native American heritage. (see Appendix for a complete listing of the focus group participants) Their challenge would be to inventory and explore the diversity of ideas surrounding the spiritual value and uses of the natural environment.

Purpose

The overall purpose of the Santa Fe focus group was to have an intensive, open-ended two day discussion revolving around the prospects for researching the spiritual benefits of natural areas. Driving the discussion was a concern for someday providing recreation land managers with useful information about the nature of spiritual experiences and the environmental conditions that contribute to their occurrence. With such information in hand, land managers would likely be better able to carry out their professional responsibilities. The discussion was framed by the following general concerns:

1. Can a spiritual response, as it relates to the use and human valuing of natural areas, be defined better, or if a definition cannot be agreed on, can its most essential dimensions be identified? There are many people, inside and outside of public land management agencies, who believe that a more holistic perspective on the spiritual dimension must be integrated into conventional rationalistic and reductive approaches to land management. Before this can happen, a better conceptualization is needed of what is meant by a spiritual response.
2. Can a spiritual response be defined as an experience, an orientation, a set of beliefs, a class of uses, a class of benefits, or what? What are the "things" that "spiritual" applies to? Is it use, user, activity, experience, psychological state, "consumptive" good, derived good, social good, a belief system, a way of life, all of these, or what? Which of these perspectives are most useful for the purposes of improving land management? Is spiritual a category of these things, or one of several dimensions of objects that make up these categories? Also, if particular types of spiritual benefits can be identified, are they attributable to particular types of natural settings?
3. Are conventional approaches to land management -- as derived from the conventional training of natural resource

professionals -- compatible with more holistic thinking needed to understand and appreciate the spiritual domain of land management and use? There is a need to change mindsets, but realistically how can this be done and to what extent? Is there any type of training, or structured awareness enhancement, that can be "programmed" by public land management agencies to: increase/promote sensitivity of public land administrators, planners, and managers to the spiritual uses, values, and benefits of public lands; increase their understanding of these uses, values and benefits; direct management toward better provision of opportunities for users to pursue their spiritual objectives; and accomplish a managing agency's stated social objectives, such as promotion of an environmental ethic?

4. Can the public's understanding of and sensitivity to spiritual uses, values, and benefits be enhanced to promote better opportunities for such uses, values and benefits? Do public attitudes constrain opportunities for spiritual uses of public lands?

5. What enhances realization of spiritual benefits in natural settings? What constrains it? Can this realization be facilitated or constrained by actions of land managers? What are the causes and effects, and which causes are under managerial control?

6. Is there a relationship between environmental spirituality and environmental psychology? Is "environmental personality" a factor in how one experiences and interprets the natural environment? Does how one defines "spiritual" hinge to some extent on personality? Is spirituality an emotional experience that we obtain through feelings, or is it a cognitive experience that we obtain through logic and reasoning? Or both? What implications might this have for management?

7. Are there testable hypotheses about spiritual uses, values, and benefits of natural areas? Can meaningful research be done, and, if so, what are some hypotheses that can be tested? How can the research problem be formulated -- empirically, dialectically, epistemologically, etc.? Can trade-off analyses involving other uses of natural areas be conducted?

8. What purposes should be served by the planned follow-up workshop with a published proceedings? What objectives should be stated? What papers should be written and why? Who should be involved? How should the workshop be structured?

While the Santa Fe focus group did not provide answers to all of the questions embedded in the above concerns, considerable progress was made in several areas. It is to those areas that we now turn.

Proceedings Synthesis

The Problem of Language

At the outset, the focus group acknowledged the limitations of language as a medium for communicating the meaning of "spiritual." It was generally agreed that the Whorfian Hypothesis (Whorf 1956), the idea that the language one speaks not only reflects one's worldview but shapes it as well, could just as easily inhibit understanding across participants as promote it, and that it was therefore incumbent on each group member to be sensitive to the biases embedded in her or his own language while being equally sensitive to the different ways of knowing mirrored in the language of others. (see Gallagher 1992)

For example, the word "spiritual" carries with it a variety of connotations depending on one's cultural and social heritage. To some "spiritual" connotes a religious feeling while to others it has no such connotation. To some "spiritual" suggests an intangible essence that defies description and calibration while to others "spiritual," like other psychological constructs, can potentially be defined and measured. The idea, then, that the words spoken by the participants might prove inadequate somehow to the task of a full understanding of each other's perspectives was understood to be a likely limitation of the gathering. No matter how clearly people thought they were communicating, the shortcomings of language would leave something of the meaning of "spiritual" unresolved. There would yet remain a mystery. With that humbling delimitation the group was ready to move on.

A Working Definition of "Spiritual"

An ensuing round table discussion revealed a high degree of convergent thinking regarding the meaning of the word "spiritual." Schroeder's (1991) definition served as a point of departure:

"'Spiritual' refers to the experience of being related to or in touch with an 'other' that transcends one's individual sense of self and gives meaning to one's life at a deeper than intellectual level." (p. 25)

While there was some discussion about whether the "other" to which this definition refers must be "larger" than oneself (Could it not, for example, simply be different from oneself? And if so, could we not then substitute "is different from" for "transcends"?), Schroeder's definition was generally accepted. (The "is different from"/"transcends" debate reflected the group's general uneasiness with hierarchical language whenever it appeared in the discussion.)

Several other conceptions of "spiritual" were also discussed which reinforced Schroeder's definition. Among them were the following recurring themes which, when considered collectively, reveal the group's assessment of the essential characteristics of spiritual experiences: the idea of an irreversible personal transformation triggered by an encounter with an other; the idea of a revealed truth which goes beyond the cognitive domain and which is accompanied by feelings of reverence, respect and awe; the idea of feeling related to and connected with an other; the idea of experiencing the other not as object but as subject; the idea of feeling a part of something larger or different than oneself; and the idea of

the interrelationship of all things. Keywords such as *encounter*, *transformation*, *revelation*, *reverence*, *respect*, *awe*, *interrelatedness*, and *connectedness* were at the heart of what the participants perceived as being "spiritual."

Integral to Schroeder's definition is the understanding that the "other" to which spiritual relatedness refers does not have to be a deity or supernatural being. As he puts it:

"The 'other' that one encounters need not be conceptualized in traditional religious terms. Depending on the individual, the transcendent other may be seen as a supernatural deity (e.g. God) or as a natural entity (e.g. the Earth). It may be something that exists objectively 'out there' (e.g. the process of evolution) or it may be a subjective, inner phenomenon (e.g. creative inspiration). It may originate independently of the human sphere (e.g. wilderness) or it may be a product of human culture (e.g. a community). For some people, the 'other' may not be a specific entity at all, but the undefinable 'ground of being' that gives rise to all existing things." (Schroeder, loc. cit.)

In sum, the encounter with the 'other,' however it is conceived, is of no small consequence. It triggers a powerful, transformative psychological experience. As Schroeder concludes, "in some important way the experience gives meaning to one's life and helps to define who one is in relation to the world." (Ibid.)

The participants felt that spiritual experiences, as described by Schroeder and others (see, for example, McDonald et al. 1988),

involve the exploration of life's essential questions: Who am I? Where did I come from? What am I doing here? Where am I going? How should I live my life? The axis upon which these questions turn, they reasoned further, is an examination of "self" in relation to "other" as prompted by, what Cheney (1989) calls, a genuine encounter with the "other."

The Idea of Spiritual Benefits

Equipped with this working definition, several questions follow that lend themselves to social science inquiry. To what extent do spiritual experiences occur in natural settings, to whom, and under what conditions? What are the salient features of these experiences and how do they differ from other kinds of human experience? Are there social, cultural, and personality factors that influence the shape and form of spiritual experiences? What, if any, linkages exist between spiritual experiences and elements of the environment in which they occur? What are the consequences of spiritual experiences for individuals having them and for those with whom they associate? How long do such consequences last? In what ways, then, might spiritual experiences be considered beneficial?

Driver and his associates have defined benefit as "a *change* that is viewed to be advantageous---an improvement in condition, or a gain to an individual, a group, to society, or to another entity." (Driver et al., 1991, p.4) The overriding question for recreation land managers is how might a personal transformation (i.e. change) triggered by a sense of relatedness to or being in touch with an "other" (e.g. nature) be viewed as advantageous--an improvement in

condition, or a gain to an individual, a group, to society, or to another entity?

While this question has yet to be answered scientifically, ultimately that is the challenge. For, as Elsner puts it, "research lays the knowledge path for management to walk on." But at this point it is useful to discuss in more detail just why it is that the participants felt so strongly that the question was worth pursuing.

Spiritual Benefits in Their Larger Context

Many of the consultants in the focus group felt that human beings in the Western world have tended to view themselves as being separate from and above nature. They attributed such a worldview to a variety of causes including the Judeo-Christian tradition (White 1967), the Scientific Revolution (Kuhn 1970, Clark 1989), and the rise of capitalism in the West (Berman 1981). They felt further that this worldview contributes, in turn, to a highly instrumental view of nature, a view that ascribes value to things natural largely in terms of their utility to humans. People are seen in the West, they continued, as being in the driver's seat, as being in control, as having a license to do with the natural world as they see fit.

Of particular concern to the focus group was what they perceived to be the misguided nature of this worldview. An outlook based on the ideas of separation and control, they felt, would likely be detrimental to the health and well-being of the planet in its entirety. They argued, instead, for connectedness and interdependence as keywords to describe the human condition.

As Theologian Sallie McFague reasons, "all things living and not living are the products of the same primal explosion and evolutionary history, and hence are interrelated in an internal way from the very beginning." (McFague 1992, p. 51) From this perspective, any view of humankind based on notions of separation and dominance seem inherently flawed. Indeed, McFague points out that the more complex entities within the web of life are actually more dependent on the less complex entities, that humans, for example, need plants more than plants need humans. (McFague, p. 52) The fundamental reality, according to McFague, is one of interrelatedness and interdependence, a reality that carries with it certain implications for the way in which humans ought to live their lives. From this perspective, to conduct business as usual, to continue to think of humans as the Earth's authority figures, is, in the words of Augustine, to be "living a lie." (McFague, p. 51)

McFague's is but one of many contemporary voices to challenge the wisdom of the predominant Western worldview. Indeed, there seems to be increasing convergence from a variety of perspectives attesting to its inadequacy. As Elder (1992) describes the transition from a cosmology based on separation and hierarchy to one based on connectedness and community:

"It is consistent with the Native American belief in the inextricability of human life from the rest of nature; with the tendency of modern physics to perceive dynamic patterns of relationship rather than discrete, solid objects; with the democratic models of government that have steadily supplanted more authoritarian regimes

over the past two centuries of human history. Such a sense of community, though supported by much eloquent testimony within our tradition, also challenges much in our conception of land-ownership and in our exploitation of natural resources. For most of us in the West, integrating the values of natural harmony into our day-to-day life calls for a spiritual reorientation so fundamental as to be, at heart, a conversion." (p. 199)

When Thoreau asks in *Walden*, "Shall I not have intelligence with the earth? Am I not partly leaves and vegetable mould myself?" (p. 95), he is inquiring about the nature of that conversion. In a world of interrelatedness and interconnectedness, how does one live a responsible life?

According to the focus group, at least part of the answer may lie in increased respect for all living things, increased awareness of the impacts of our actions on others, and increased restraint in the conduct of our lives. Albert Schweitzer posed the challenge to the human family thus:

"I am life that wills to live, in the midst of life that wills to live. The mysterious fact of my will to live is that I feel a mandate to behave with sympathetic concern toward all wills to live which exist side by side with my own." (Schweitzer 1965)

According to Schweitzer, "ethics consist," therefore, ". . . in my experiencing the compulsion to show to all wills to live the same reverence as I do to my own." (Schweitzer 1957) Schweitzer goes on to say that "the essence of Goodness is: Preserve life, promote life,

help life achieve its highest destiny. The essence of Evil is: Destroy life, harm life, hamper the development of life." (Schweitzer, 1965, p. 26) Schweitzer's ethics are reminiscent of Aldo Leopold's when he said:

"Examine each question in terms of what is ethically and esthetically right, as well as what is economically expedient. A thing is right when it intends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise."

(Leopold, 1949, pp. 224-225)

For Leopold, Schweitzer, and the Santa Fe focus group, learning to live our lives in ways that are more compatible with the dynamic structure of the whole is the fundamental challenge of our time. To the extent that spiritual encounters in natural areas contribute toward such compatible living, to the extent that they renew our sense of connectedness to and reliance on the Earth for our survival, to the extent that they lead to greater respect for all living things, to more conscientious thinking about the impacts of our actions on others, and ultimately to greater restraint in the conduct of our lives, then they may be defined as beneficial. And to the extent that National Forests provide the settings for such spiritual insights, they may be viewed as being of particular importance to the health and well-being of American society as it makes its way into the 21st century.

Management Implications

And what role might the U. S. Forest Service play in preparing for the 21st century? How might the Forest Service expand its management philosophy to better accommodate the spiritual realm? The focus group agreed that future management practices could be based on a management philosophy that *recognizes nature and humankind in community, that is life sustaining, and that nurtures cultural and biological diversity*. Such a management philosophy not only implies being open to, and understanding of, the various publics that find meaning in the National Forests, but also modeling "intelligence" with the Earth in the development and implementation of Forest Service policy.

The difficulty of this challenge was not underestimated by the focus group. Supplementing an instrumental view of people-environment relations with a spiritual view "in which physical settings are viewed not [solely] as tools, but as ends in themselves--as contexts in which important human values can be cultivated," (Stokols 1988) will require modification of the scientific approach to contemporary natural resource management. A management philosophy that integrates both the science and spiritual realm of natural environments would view nature, in the words of Schroeder, as "an 'other' to be loved and respected, rather than a physical and biological process to be controlled and manipulated for human benefit." (Schroeder, p. 29)

The focus group felt these changes would require changes in the education and training of natural resource professionals themselves. An emphasis on understanding scientific principles of

land management would be augmented by insights from the social sciences, the arts, and the humanities regarding culturally and socially diverse ways of interpreting the spiritual significance of the natural world. This implies honoring and protecting other ways of knowing and thinking about human-environment relations in addition to traditional science.

The current challenge encompassed in the management of sacred sites provided the group with several cases in point. In California, for example, Native Americans, New Age practitioners, and Forest Service personnel are entangled in a dispute over the "appropriate" use of the Mt. Shasta Wilderness. (Fernandez-Gimenez et al. 1992) Conflicts center on both the ecological and cultural impacts associated with the different uses being made of Mt. Shasta, long recognized for its spiritual significance. Forest Service policy proceeds from the assumption that wilderness is a place where humans are visitors who do not remain, where there is little or no sign of human habitation, and where primitive and unconfined types of recreation are appropriate. Native Americans, on the other hand, see the Mt. Shasta Wilderness as home, as a place to which human beings have always belonged. Meanwhile, New Age enthusiasts, attempting to overcome what they perceive to be humankind's alienation from the natural world, are interested in promoting a personal and spiritual relationship with the Earth as a living being.

In practice, this means the Forest Service objects when Native Americans move rocks to build medicine wheels in the wilderness and New Age practitioners move rocks to construct altars or shrines in the wilderness on the grounds that such actions violate the intent

of wilderness policy, while the Forest Service itself moves rocks in the wilderness to build trails. This seeming contradiction in Forest Service policy is a source of consternation to both the Native American and New Age constituencies.

Resolving these and similar disputes, the focus group agreed, will require a level of trust and understanding among the various publics and the Forest Service that is lacking today. The trust will have to be built upon a foundation of respect that can only come with genuine attempts to understand one another's worldviews and a corresponding commitment to involving the different publics in the formulation of public land policy. Developing this trust will take time and effort and the patience to listen to what people are saying cross culturally. In this regard, the focus group concluded, building multi-cultural responsiveness into outdoor recreation management is absolutely essential to the responsible stewardship of the National Forests (Dustin, Knopf, and Fox 1992)

Ultimately, the focus group felt that the Forest Service has an opportunity to play a leading educational role in sensitizing the general public to the spiritual significance of the natural world. The challenge is not to promote a particular spiritual orientation, but to encourage the public to honor and protect each other's diverse spiritual perspectives and further sensitize them to their personal responsibility to live their lives in a way that makes room for, rather than excludes, other spiritual views.

The focus group agreed further that the leadership called for from the Forest Service should be based on a fundamental sense of respect for all that is beyond human making and human ken. Their

sentiment was reminiscent of John Muir when he spoke derisively of "Lord Man," and more recently of E. F. Schumacher when he addressed the confusion that results when people place themselves above nature:

"There is no escape from this confusion as long as the land and the creatures upon it are looked upon as *nothing but* 'factors of production'. They are, of course, factors of production, that is to say, means-to-ends, but this is their secondary, not their primary, nature. Before everything else, they are ends-in-themselves; they are meta-economic, and it is therefore rationally justifiable to say, as a statement of fact, that they are in a certain sense sacred. Man has not made them, and it is irrational for him to treat things that he has not made and cannot make and cannot recreate once he has spoilt them, in the same manner and spirit as he is entitled to treat things of his own making." (Schumacher 1973, pp. 99-100)

The focus group agreed that this does not mean we must "stop at everything" in our interactions with the natural world.

(Goodpaster, 1980) Obviously the land and its creatures play a critical instrumental role in our continued livelihood. We need to make use of nature. But as Schumacher reasons, if "consumption is merely a means to human well-being, the aim [in this finite world] should be to obtain the maximum of well-being with a minimum of consumption." (Schumacher, p. 54) We are obliged to economize, to stretch harvested resources to their limits, to sacrifice life to sustain other life with providential care. We are obliged to do these things

because of our common understanding that we should not waste what is inherently valuable.

Assuming a more modest position in the community of life would not be an act of contrition. It would, in the words of Aldo Leopold, simply be changing our role "from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it." (Leopold, p. 204) We would be extending respect to our fellow members and the community as such. And in so doing, we would be expressing a heightened sense of respect for ourselves. (Dustin, McAvoy and Schultz, p. 62) In this regard, giving up our psychic investment in a sense of separateness and specialness in the universe would be freeing ourselves to reach for a higher awareness of what it means to be human. (Stone 1974)

Modeling respect and restraint in the development and implementation of Forest Service policies and practices, the focus group reasoned, would thus be based on the recognition that we are "not mere bundles of preferences, but human beings capable of more than desire: we are not merely self-interested consumers bent on achieving the lowest common denominator of satisfaction." (Sagoff 1981) Rather, we are capable of conversion, of seeing ourselves simply as citizens of the larger community of life, of having intelligence with the Earth.

In closing, one of the Native American participants pointed out that the "Great Spirit" was better translated as the "Great Mystery." The recognition that humankind may never fully understand the true nature of its origin and its relationship with the rest of creation carries with it a certain humility that the focus group felt should

never be forgotten. Fortunately, they seemed to understand without saying, the natural world has ways of refreshing our memory, of restoring our perspective, of reminding us of our place.

Research Issues

In assessing the progress that has been made in documenting the benefits of leisure, Mannell and Stynes (1991) conclude that spiritual benefits are at this point largely speculative. Their conclusion is substantiated by McDonald and Schreyer (1991) who conducted a state-of-knowledge literature review of the benefits of spiritual experiences only to report that "there is virtually no research that addresses such an issue." (p. 188) That spiritual benefits have yet to be a focus for scientific study may be explained both by the common association of the spiritual realm with religion and a corresponding assumption that it should be off limits to government funded research, and by the difficulties associated with the operationalization of terms. (McDonald and Schreyer, p. 179) But to the extent that spiritual experiences are not conceived of as being either religious or metaphysical, their investigation seems worth pursuing for reasons already discussed. The issue is how best to go about it?

The focus group recommended that if the fundamental research questions revolve around better understanding the meaning of spiritual responses to nature by people who are transformed by them, then a qualitative research approach employing in-depth interviewing, focus groups and field research may be the best way to begin. Such an approach is based on an interpretive paradigm which

assumes that "meanings are what are important, social behavior can best be understood in its natural environment, reality is the meaning attributed to experience, and social reality is not the same for all people." (Bullock 1983) This interpretive paradigm, in turn, is associated with a phenomenological worldview. As Spiegelberg (1975) describes it:

"Phenomenology is the name for a philosophical movement whose primary objective is the direct investigation and description of phenomena as consciously experienced, without theories about their causal explanations and as free as possible from unexamined preconceptions and presuppositions." (p. 3)

It was generally felt that a qualitative research approach was particularly appropriate for investigating spiritual phenomena because of its grounded nature, its flexibility, and its descriptive power. While some people felt that a more quantitative research approach would be highly inappropriate, either because the approach itself would somehow alter the spiritual phenomena under study, or because reducing spirituality to mere numbers would debase its meaning, others felt that qualitative research would likely lead to insights about the nature and benefits of spiritual experiences that would then lend themselves to theory development, more quantitative research designs, and ultimately, toward greater confidence in any findings through triangulated measures.

The conversation about possible research strategies was illuminating because it reflected the unsettled feelings some participants had about the desirability of researching spiritual

benefits in the first place. Their concerns can be summarized thus: To the extent that science "takes apart" spiritual phenomena in an effort to understand them, might their spiritual essence evaporate? Might the mystery disappear? To the extent that the aims of science are prediction and control, might information about spiritual benefits be put to use in ways that are manipulative and highly objectionable? Are there not, perhaps, some intangibles in life that are beyond the bounds of scientific inquiry, that are bigger than science, that, in effect, should be left alone? Is not spirituality one of them?

While being sensitive to these concerns, other participants pointed out that any contributions science could make to a deeper understanding of spiritual benefits would be to the better because decisions about the use to which public lands are put are based, in part, on scientific knowledge. To not research spiritual benefits, to not try to better understand them scientifically, would likely be to the detriment of those people who find spiritual meaning in the public lands. This is so because, for better or worse, planners and policymakers tend to rely on scientific knowledge. In the absence of any such knowledge about spiritual benefits, future decisions might well be made based on what is known scientifically about the benefits of other uses, uses that may preclude or interfere with spiritual uses.

The real concern, then, is the process by which any scientific understanding of spiritual benefits would be put to use. Who would be involved in the process? How would input to the process be solicited and evaluated? Who would be given a place at the decision

table? These are questions, however, that are beyond the purview of science.

Once again, sacred sites are a case in point. How should scientific information about the location of sacred sites, and their meaning to those who find them sacred, be employed? Should it be employed? Should sacred sites be identified as such? Should their whereabouts be made known to the general public? Should sacred sites be interpreted to enhance the general public's understanding of their significance? How can public officials justify denying the general public such information when the sacred sites are on public land? These are the kinds of questions that pertain to the potential use or nonuse of scientific knowledge. They are real and thorny and significant to the future of recreation land management. And, in the minds of the focus group, they must be dealt with sensitively.

Follow-Up Workshop

In bringing the Santa Fe focus group to a close, everyone agreed that a more formal, follow-up workshop was needed to assess the state-of-knowledge about public land management and the human spirit. Of particular interest would be papers devoted to 1) language as a barrier to, and a barrier breaker in, understanding spiritual responses to nature; 2) cross cultural as well as cross disciplinary perspectives on the meaning of spiritual experiences in nature; 3) environmental, personality, and other factors that contribute to, constrain, or in any other way influence the nature of spiritual experiences; 4) the role of public land management agencies in providing opportunities for, and educating for, spiritual

experiences; 4) the place of spiritual renewal in public land policy formulation; and 5) and appropriate research paradigms, approaches, methods, and questions related to identifying the spiritual benefits of natural areas.

That follow-up workshop has now been planned for September 28-30, 1993 at Ghost Ranch, New Mexico. Participants will be the authors of the aforementioned papers who will use the workshop as an opportunity to discuss each other's work. The papers will then be refined in preparation for their publication in a book that is intended to capture the significance of the topic as well as map out its various dimensions. The book may then serve as a point of departure for anyone in quest of a better understanding of the spiritual benefits of natural areas to their own lives, to society, and to the world at large.

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